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RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 0040
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRAGUE 001124

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/12/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [IR](#) [LE](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [SY](#) [XG](#) [EZ](#)

SUBJECT: CZECHS: STILL NO DECISION ON UNIFIL TROOPS (BUT
OUTLOOK NOT GOOD)

REF: A. STATE 148157
[1](#)B. STATE 150032
[1](#)C. PRAGUE 1060
[1](#)D. PRAGUE 898

Classified By: Political-Economic Counselor Mike Dodman
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. The Czechs remain undecided on whether to commit troops to UNIFIL (the MFA still supports it, but MOD sources say budgetary constraints make troop commitment "highly unlikely"). Nevertheless, the Czechs have committed or spent nearly \$1 million in humanitarian aid and assistance in Lebanon, and are receptive to the request to provide immediate support for the removal of unexploded ordinance, or equipment and training for the Lebanese army. On Syria, the Czechs cautiously support the EU initiative to arrange for Javier Solana to meet with Syrian and Iranian officials to persuade them to cooperate on Lebanon. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Poloff met with the Czech MFA Head of the Near East Group in the Middle East and Africa Department Jaromir Marek on September 12 to discuss the points in Reftel A on the current situation in Lebanon, and to deliver Reftel B talking points on Syria.

Lebanon

[1](#)3. (C) Marek confirmed that the Czechs have committed or already spent almost \$1 million (22 million Czech Crowns (CZK)) on assistance for Lebanon (Ref C).

[1](#)4. (C) On troop deployments, Marek said the Czechs are "very likely" to commit troops for UNIFIL. He predicted the number of troops would be "symbolic") probably no more than 50 to 100 troops) and would not be deployed before the first troop rotation in approximately six months. However, on September 13, a source within the MOD's Security and Defense Policy Department said a final decision has not/not been made, but that commitment of troops is "highly unlikely." Local press reported on September 12 that the new Defense Minister Jiri Sedivy said the Czech Republic is not likely to send troops because it does not have the financial resources to pay for deployment in Lebanon. He estimated the cost at \$4 million, and said his priority is maintaining current commitments in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo, and Bosnia.

[1](#)5. (C) On the removal of unexploded ordinance, Marek said the

Czechs may be willing to provide experts and/or equipment for such an effort. (Note: Marek said the Czechs would make the donation in coordination with EU forces, in response to a specific request from the EU. Therefore, because time is of the essence, the Department may want to urge the EU to make the request in the short term. End note.)

¶16. (C) Regarding support for the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), the Czechs expressed concern that donations of arms could fall into the hands of Hizbollah. However, the Czechs would consider providing training assistance or equipment for the LAF.

¶17. (C) On humanitarian assistance: Marek said the Czechs earmarked \$313,000 (7 million CZK) for NGO projects in Lebanon. According to Marek, the MFA decided which projects to fund on September 11, but has not announced its decision. Separately, a Ministry of Interior official informed Poloff on September 13 that the MOI has identified possible recipients for the proposed Czech medevac program for Lebanon (Ref D). Post will provide more information on these humanitarian projects as it becomes available.

Syria/Iran

¶18. (C) Marek said the EU has given EU Foreign Policy Chief Javier Solana the green light to meet with Syria and Iran to encourage them to cooperate on Lebanon. The Czechs cautiously support this decision, but unlike some other EU member states, oppose an enlargement of this effort if Solana's initial contacts are unsuccessful.

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Comment

¶19. (C) Comment. The Czechs have committed significant money (by Czech standards) for humanitarian aid and assistance in Lebanon, and some members of their government want to step up to the plate and commit troops to UNIFIL. With a new government at the helm and the reality of a limited budget, however, a decision to commit troops appears to be increasingly unlikely. End comment.
CABANISS